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ALEXANDER AND THE TREE.

"From this tree it was that the Voice came which spake of old to Iskander (Alexander the Great), saying, as an oracle, 'Iskander indeed cometh into India, but goeth from thence into the Land of Darkness.'"—*Apocryphal History of Alexander the Great.*

The sun is bright, the air is bland,
The heavens wear that stainless blue
Which only in an Orient land
The eye of man may view;
And lo! around, and all abroad,
A glittering host, a mighty horde—
And at their head a demigod
Who slays with lightning-sword!

The bright noon burns, but idly now
Those warriors rest by copse and hill,
And shadows on their Leader's brow
Seem ominous of ill:
Spell-bound, he stands beside a tree,
And well he may, for through its leaves
Unstirred by wind, come brokenly
Moans, as of one that grieves!

How strange! he thought;—Life is a boon
Given, and resumed—but *how?* and *when?*
But now I asked myself how soon
I should go home again!
How soon I might once more behold
My mourning mother's tearful face;
How soon my kindred might enfold
Me in their dear embrace!

There was an Indian Magian there—
And, stepping forth, he bent his knee:
"Oh, king!" he said, "be wise!—beware
This too prophetic tree!"
"Ha!" cried the king, "thou knowest, then, Seer,
What yon strange oracle reveals?"
"Alas!" the Magian said, "I hear
Deep words, like thunder-peals!"

"I hear the groans of more than Man,
Hear tones that warn, denounce, beseech;
Hear—woe is me!—how darkly ran
That stream of thrilling speech!
'Oh, king,' it spake, 'all-trampling king!
Thou leadest legions from afar—
But Battle droops his clotted wing!
Night menaces thy star!"

"Fond visions of thy boyhood's years
Dawn like dim light upon thy soul;
Thou seest again thy mother's tears
Which Love could not control!
Ah! thy career in sooth is run!
Ah! thou indeed returnest home!
The Mother waits to clasp her son
Low in her lampless dome!"

"Yet go, rejoicing! He who reigns
O'er Earth alone leaves worlds unscanned;
Life binds the spirit as with chains;
Seek thou the Phantom-land!
Leave Conquest all it looks for here—
Leave willing slaves a bloody throne—
Thine henceforth is another sphere,
Death's realm, the dark Unknown!"

The Magian paused; the leaves were hushed,
But wailings broke from all around,
Until the Chief, whose red blood flushed
His cheek with hotter bound,
Asked, in the tones of one with whom
Fear never yet had been a guest—
"And when doth Fate achieve my doom?
And where shall be my rest?"

"Oh, noble heart!" the Magian said,
And tears unbidden filled his eyes,
"We should not weep for thee!—the Dead
Change but their home and skies:
The moon shall beam, the myrtles bloom
For thee no more—yet sorrow not!
The immortal pomp of Hades' gloom
Best consecrates thy lot."

In June, in June, in laughing June,
And where the dells show deepest green,
Pavilioned overhead, at noon,
With gold and silken sheen—
These be for thee—the place, the time;
Trust not thy heart, trust not thine eyes,
Behind the Mount thy warm hopes climb,
The Land of Darkness lies!"

Unblenching at the fateful words,
The Hero turned around in haste—
"On! on!" he cried, "ye million swords,
Your course, like mine, is traced;
Let me but close Life's narrow span
Where weapons clash and banners wave;
I would not live to mourn that Man
But conquers for a grave!"

M.

APOLOGUES AND FABLES,

IN PROSE AND VERSE, FROM THE GERMAN AND OTHER
LANGUAGES.

(Translated for the Irish Penny Journal.)

No. II.—THE THREE RINGS.

IN the reign of the Sultan Sal-ad-Deen there lived in the city of Damascus a Jew called Nathaniel, who was pre-eminently distinguished among his fellow-citizens for his wisdom, his liberality of mind, the goodness of his disposition, and the urbanity of his manners, so that he had acquired the esteem even of those among the Moslem who were accounted the strictest adherents to the exclusive tenets of the Mahomedan creed. From being generally talked of by the common people, he came gradually to attract the notice of the higher classes, until the sultan himself, hearing so much of the man, became curious to learn how it was that so excellent and intelligent a person could reconcile it with his conscience to live and die in the errors of Judaism. With the view of satisfying himself on the subject, he at length resolved on condescending to a personal interview with the Jew, and accordingly one day ordered him to be summoned before him.

The Jew, in obedience to the imperial mandate, presented himself at the palace gates, and was forthwith ushered, amid guards and slaves innumerable, into the presence of the august Sal-ad-Deen, Light of the World, Protector of the Universe, and Keeper of the Portals of Paradise; who, however, being graciously determined that the lightning of his glances should not annihilate the Israelite, had caused his face to be covered on the occasion with a magnificent veil, through the golden gauze-work of which he could carry on at his ease his own examination of his visitor's features.

"Men talk highly of thee, Nathaniel," said the sultan, after he had commanded the Jew to seat himself on the carpet; "they praise thy virtue, thy integrity, thy understanding, beyond those of the sons of Adam. Yet thou professest a false religion, and showest no sign of a disposition to embrace the true one. How is this obstinacy of thine reconcilable with the wisdom and moderation for which the true believers give thee credit?"

"If I profess a false religion, your highness," returned the Jew modestly, "it is because I have never been able to distinguish infallibly between false religions and true. I adhere to the faith of my fathers."

"The idolaters do so no less than thou," said Sal-ad-Deen, "but their blindness is wilful, and so is thine. Dost thou mean to say that all religions are upon the same level in the sight of the God of Truth?"

"Not so, assuredly," answered Nathaniel: "Truth is but one; and there can be but one true religion. That is a simple and obvious axiom, the correctness of which I have never sought to controvert."

"Spoken like a wise man!" cried the sultan;—"that is," he added, "if the religion to which thou alludest be Islamism, as it must be of course. Come: I know thou art favourably inclined towards the truth; thou hast an honest countenance: declare openly the conviction at which thou must have long since arrived, that they who believe in the Koran are the sole inheritors of Paradise. Is not that thy unhesitating persuasion?"

"Will your highness pardon me," said the Jew, "if, instead of answering you directly, I narrate to you a parable